

CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Heritage Preservation Commission
HPC Agenda Item #2
December 13, 2016
PLAN3226 / BZH-29013

HERITAGE PRESERVATION APPLICATION SUMMARY

Property Location: See Attached
Project Name: Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District
Prepared By: Andrew Frenz, City Planner, (612) 673-3790
Applicant: City Council Vice-President Elizabeth Glidden
Project Contact: Andrew Frenz
Ward: 8
Neighborhood: Bryant, Field, Regina
Request: Local historic designation of the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District

HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

Current Name	Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District
Historic Name	Tilsenbilt Homes
Historic Address	See Attached
Original Construction Date	1954-1956
Original Architect	Norman R. Johnson
Original Builder	Edward N. Tilsen
Original Engineer	N/A
Historic Use	Single-family residential
Current Use	Single-family residential
Proposed Use	Single-family residential

Proposed District Property Addresses

Current Address	Historic Address
343 41 st Street East	4100 4 th Avenue South
4016 4 th Avenue South	4016 4 th Avenue South
4020 4 th Avenue South	4020 4 th Avenue South
4021 4 th Avenue South	4021 4 th Avenue South
4116 4 th Avenue South	4116 4 th Avenue South
4121 4 th Avenue South	4121 4 th Avenue South
4219 4 th Avenue South	4219 4 th Avenue South
4223 4 th Avenue South	4223 4 th Avenue South
4227 4 th Avenue South	4227 4 th Avenue South
4408 4 th Avenue South	4408 4 th Avenue South
4412 4 th Avenue South	4412 4 th Avenue South
4421 4 th Avenue South	4421 4 th Avenue South
4441 4 th Avenue South	4441 4 th Avenue South
4445 4 th Avenue South	4445 4 th Avenue South
4448 4 th Avenue South	4448 4 th Avenue South
4500 4 th Avenue South	4500 4 th Avenue South
4501 4 th Avenue South	4501 4 th Avenue South
4504 4 th Avenue South	4504 4 th Avenue South
3928 5 th Avenue South	3928 5 th Avenue South
3943 5 th Avenue South	3943 5 th Avenue South
4004 5 th Avenue South	4004 5 th Avenue South
4012 5 th Avenue South	4012 5 th Avenue South
4016 5 th Avenue South	4016 5 th Avenue South
4020 5 th Avenue South	4020 5 th Avenue South
4021 5 th Avenue South	4021 5 th Avenue South
4025 5 th Avenue South	4025 5 th Avenue South

4028 5 th Avenue South	4028 5 th Avenue South
4032 5 th Avenue South	4032 5 th Avenue South
4036 5 th Avenue South	4036 5 th Avenue South
4040 5 th Avenue South	4040 5 th Avenue South
4044 5 th Avenue South	4044 5 th Avenue South
4645 5 th Avenue South	4645 5 th Avenue South

SUMMARY

In January 2016, Elizabeth Glidden, Minneapolis City Council Vice-President, submitted an application for nomination to the City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) for the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District, located along Third, Fourth, and Fifth Avenues South between 39th Street East and 47th Street East. After completing an initial review, CPED recommended to the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) on January 19, 2016 that the properties exhibited at least one of the local designation criteria found in Section 599.210 of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance. The HPC adopted CPED's findings and placed the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District under interim protection and called for a designation study to be conducted.

In February and June of 2016, Council Member Glidden submitted applications to nominate additional properties as part of the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District. On March 8, 2016, and June 21, 2016, the HPC placed these additional properties under interim protection and called for their inclusion in the designation study.

A designation study was completed in the summer of 2016 (attached) and has been presented for review to both the State Historic Preservation Office and the City of Minneapolis Planning Commission.

One nominated property, 3928 4th Avenue South, has not been included in the designation study and is not recommended for designation. This property was identified by staff as part of the Tilsenbilt Homes project during early research prior to the nomination, however further research revealed that this structure was not constructed as part of the Tilsenbilt project and has been excluded from further study.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PLANS AND POLICIES

Title 23, Chapter 599.260 of Minneapolis Code of Ordinances requires the planning director to submit all proposed designations to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission for review and comment on the proposed designation. In its review, the City Planning Commission shall consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city's comprehensive plan
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City Council

The designation of the subject property meets the following relevant policies of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*:

Heritage Preservation Policy 8.1: Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.

- 8.1.1 Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance.
- 8.1.4 Designate resources recommended for designation from historic surveys and listed on the National Register of Historic Places which have no local protection.

Heritage Preservation Policy 8.2: Continue to evaluate potential historic resources for future studies and designation as the city ages.

- 8.2.2 Identify and document the city's 20th century and post-war resources as part of the city's heritage. These resources may be increasingly threatened due to lack of awareness or the information necessary to evaluate their significance.

Heritage Preservation Policy 8.8: Preserve neighborhood character by preserving the quality of the built environment.

- 8.8.1 Preserve and maintain the character and quality of residential neighborhoods with regulatory tools such as the zoning code and housing maintenance code.
- 8.8.2 In addition to local designation, develop other preservation tools, like conservation districts, to preserve the historic character of neighborhoods and landscapes.

Heritage Preservation Policy 8.10: Promote the benefits of preservation as an economic development tool and a method to achieve greater environmental sustainability and city vitality.

- 8.10.1 Encourage rehabilitation of buildings and landscapes to stimulate economic activity in depressed areas.
- 8.10.5 Prioritize the reuse of the city's historic buildings as a strategy for sustainable development.

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area: The proposed designation of the district will set an example of the value of rehabilitating and maintaining existing residential building stock. The designation should also help promote the history of the immediate community surrounding the properties, building on neighborhood pride and identity.

The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the City Council: Some of the properties are located within the boundaries of the 38th Street and Chicago Small Area Plan/Corridor Framework Plan. While these properties are not specifically addressed, the plan supports maintaining the existing housing stock on residential blocks.

LOCAL DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Title 23, Chapter 599.210 of Minneapolis Code of Ordinances list seven criteria which shall be considered in determining whether a property is worthy of local designation as a landmark because of its historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance. The Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District meets the following designation criteria:

Criterion #1: The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.

The property is significant under criterion one due to its position as one of the first integrated housing developments in the country and its association with the twentieth-century African American civil rights movement. The Tilsenbilt Homes were part of the first privately-developed integrated housing project in Minneapolis, and one of the first in the nation. In the early and middle twentieth century, housing discrimination based on factors of race or religion was common, and often encouraged by the federal government. In the years immediately following World War II, African Americans in Minneapolis were particularly affected. During the 1940s and 50s, many blacks left southern states for the growing industrial cities of the north and west, Minneapolis among them. At the same time, the growth of racial covenants and redlining restricted housing opportunities, especially access to mortgages, for black Minneapolitans, which resulted in a severe housing shortage. Perhaps one of the most telling statistics is that out of over 9,500 single-family homes and duplexes built in Minneapolis between 1946 and 1952, fewer than twenty were sold to African American buyers. The Tilsenbilt Homes, together with other early integrated housing projects, helped to demonstrate that integrated housing could be successful and paved the way for future projects, helping to reduce discrimination in housing.

Criterion #2: The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.

The property is significant under criterion two due to its association with Edward Tilsen and Archie Givens, Sr.

Edward Tilsen, founder of Tilsenbilt Homes, Inc. and builder of the Tilsenbilt homes is significant for the role that he played in developing the first privately-developed interracial housing in Minnesota, including some of the first such projects in the nation. In 1947, Tilsen built the first privately-developed integrated rental property in the country, a series of townhomes on Carroll Avenue in Saint Paul. This property was also the first commercially-developed integrated housing in the entire country. Tilsen later developed the properties of the district as one of the first integrated single-family developments and the first privately developed integrated housing in Minneapolis. Tilsen was not publicly outspoken about integration, but his experiences as a Ukrainian Jewish immigrant fostered a strong belief in equal opportunity that he incorporated into his work, leaving a lasting legacy.

Archie Givens, Sr., realtor for the Tilsenbilt Homes project, is significant for the role that he played in some of the first interracial housing projects in Minnesota, as well as his prominence as a developer and philanthropist. When the FHA and the Minneapolis Urban League met with African American realtors in 1953 in an attempt to kick-start an integrated single-family housing development in Minneapolis, Givens committed himself to the project's success, helping to identify a builder, financing, and a location for the project which became the Tilsenbilt Homes. Givens would go on to develop the first integrated nursing homes in Minnesota, serve on the Minneapolis Housing Authority's board of directors, and develop affordable housing in and around Minneapolis. Later in life, Givens and his wife, Phebe, started a foundation devoted to the success of African American students in the Twin Cities. Later, the foundation entered a partnership with the University of Minnesota, shifting its mission to the preservation of African American cultural artifacts and the development of young black writers.

REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

The Preservation Chapter of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances (Chapter 599) requires that the designation be submitted to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review and comment.

State Historic Preservation Office

The designation was submitted to SHPO for comment on September 7, 2016. In a letter dated November 8, 2016 (attached) SHPO provided favorable comments on the designation and stated:

“The Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District is significant for its association with being the first known private interracial housing development in Minneapolis and one of the first in the United States. The district gains additional historical significance for being associated with two prominent developers: realtor Archie Givens, Sr. and builder Edward Tilsen. As such, we would concur that the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District is an ideal candidate for local designation.”

City Planning Commission

Chapter 599 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances also requires that the designation be submitted to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission (CPC) for review and comments. The ordinance states that the city planning commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the city’s comprehensive plan.
- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding area.
- (3) The consistency of the proposed designation with applicable development plans or development objective adopted by the city council.

The designation study was presented to the CPC on November 17, 2016. The CPC found that the proposed designation was consistent with the City of Minneapolis’ Comprehensive Plan and applicable development plans and objectives adopted by the City council. Furthermore, the CPC found that the proposed designation would have a positive effect on the Bryant, Field, and Regina neighborhoods. A copy of the memorandum submitted to the CPC is attached to the designation study.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission and City Council adopt staff findings for the local designation of the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District:

A. Historic District Designation.

Recommended motion: **Recommend to approve** the local designation of the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District.

ATTACHMENTS

- I. Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District Designation Study